

Adopted: July 28, 1944

File No. 563-44

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
on the
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft
During a Cross-country Pleasure Flight

Pilot Harvey Dimon Apgar and his passenger, Robert Powell, were seriously injured in an accident which occurred at Apgar, Montana, about 5 15 p.m. on March 6, 1944. Apgar held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-80 h.p. and flight instructor ratings. He had flown approximately 1226 solo hours, all in the type airplane involved. The aircraft, an Aeronca 50-F, NC 22474, owned by O. M. Strissel and Gehres Weed, was demolished.

Apgar and Powell rented the airplane for a local pleasure flight and took off from the Kalispell Airport about 4:30 p.m. Approximately 40 minutes later they were observed some 30 miles from the airport, flying low over the village of Apgar, where both resided. Witnesses stated that the plane circled the community and then flew north over the McDonald River, passing under the power line which extends across the river about 60 feet above the water. The plane continued northward to Lake McDonald, after which its course was reversed and while heading south along the river it struck and severed two wires of the power line. The airplane, rotated to the left just above the ground, then slid sideways and stopped with the right wing wedged between two small trees and the tail resting against a private residence.

Examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to the accident and the manner in which the propeller was broken indicated that considerable power was being developed at the time the aircraft struck the ground. Dual controls were connected and operative. Weather conditions were suitable for contact flight.

The pilot stated that he spent his entire flight time above his home at between 1000 and 1500 feet above the terrain. However, all witnesses stated that he was flying exceedingly low.

The probable cause of this accident was the pilot's recklessness in flying at an extremely low altitude, during which he failed to avoid an obstruction in his flight path.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary